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ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY: THE CASE OF MALAWI IN THE
ERA OF H.H. JOHNSTON, 1891-1897.

by

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In this paper we shall endeavour to make an appraisal of, among other things, the attitudes and reactions of British officials in colonial Malawi on the question of race, and to early manifestations of the pan-African spirit (1) during the time when Sir H.H. Johnston was the British Commissioner and Consul-General of British Central Africa and the British South Africa Company's sphere of operations north of the Zambezi. In particular, we shall analyse the doctrine or philosophy of 'Evolutionism' and endeavour to elucidate its practical application as the basis of a racist colonial administrative ideology that moulded the social and political policies of the colonial regime. In this exercise, we shall in particular concentrate on analysing the evolutionist world view of H.H. Johnston, the architect of British administration in colonial Malawi, and how his philosophical convictions and moral outlook influenced his own reactions to early manifestations of supra-tribal and 'Black' consciousness among the indigenous colonial population and Blacks from the New World.

Johnston's biographer, Roland Oliver, (2) has made a significant contribution in this field by his portrayal of this intellectual and moral environment in which the young Johnston was brought up, and of the range of values that shaped Johnston's political outlook and vision, and the whole ethos of his career.

Johnston was born in a devoutly Christian, well-to-do Victorian middle-class family, with plenty of 'leisure for some cultivated interests', (3) such as music, painting, and other fine pursuits. Though he later abandoned Christianity in particular and organised religion in general, he continued to have a high-religious outlook in respect of his own personal destiny. For instance, he believed in 'Evolution' as in a deity, and in himself as its devoted, and perhaps its sole intelligent servant. In addition though he himself rejected its metaphysical doctrines and its systems of worship and prayer, Johnston continued to regard Christianity and the Christian virtues as among the highest manifestations of the Evolutionary process, a manifestation which he saw as his task to support and defend against the 'lower' religions which were competing for man's allegiance in different parts of the world. His ethics and whole moral life-style was one of Christian abstinence; he was one of the advocates of Christian missionary enterprise in Africa and elsewhere, and 'by temperament was always more at home at a mission station than in an officers' mess or a Government house. (4)

1. By pan-African here (with a small 'p') we refer to a mode of African awareness transcending tribal consciousness and characterised by Black racial self-discovery and assertiveness, but short of nationalist consciousness.
2. OLIVER, R. H.H. JOHNSTON and the Scramble for Africa, 1959.
3. Ibid, p.6.
4. Ibid, p.13.

The corollary of this admiration for Christian ethics as a fine product of the human Evolutionary process was his antipathy and contempt for other religions, even such an organised and more or less universal religion as Islam. As to the 'undesirable' effects of Islam he went to great lengths to elaborate on what he saw as the negative and pernicious influence of Mohammed and the religion he founded:

All human knowledge, especially the most marvellous developments of the human mind in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have to be subjected to the intolerable sieve of the narrow mentality of Mohammed, an illiterate, uneducated bandit mystic of the seventh century A.D., who derived his knowledge of the Hebrew Bible from oral information imported by Arabian Jews, and his conception of the Christian tenets from Ethiopian slaves. Most of the great names of the golden age of Islam between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries were not those of people of Arab or Turkish descent but of Jews, Persians, Copts, Greeks, and Italians, whose conformity with the Mohammedan religion was of more or less unwilling converts, if indeed they did not by special favour retain the profession of Judaism and Christianity. The Arabs and Turks by degrees killed all that was noteworthy in Islamic culture....in short, judged by the test of output in science and art, literature, material well-being, control of disease, sexual morality, public works, subdual of recalcitrant nature, scarcely can comparison be made and sustained between the countries professing Christian religion or governed by Christian natives and the lands which remain more or less independent under the sway of Mohammedan rulers...(1)

These rather bitter and derisory views are understandable. Johnston was a typical product of Victorian England, an age during which England and the civilisation she stood for attained the apogee of her imperial power, and an age during which the Islamic Turkish Empire was correspondingly at the nadir of its fortunes. The Ottoman Empire was the 'sick man of Europe' and the centre of European imperialist machinations and rivalries. Johnston's stay in North Africa, the extensive and ancient East African slave trade conducted by the Arabs, and his clash with the Arabs and the Arabised Yao of British Central Africa all went to reinforce his anti-Arab and anti-Muslim views.

Johnston's views on the social forces that impel forward the evolutionary wheel of human social history mirrored the capitalist and individualist ethos of nineteenth century England. Man is basically selfish - that is his 'human nature' - and it is 'great ambitions' that is the motive force that drives man to scale the highest peaks on the scale of Evolution. He said, 'selfishness arightly read is one of the greatest contributors to mutual improvement. If each individual strives to perfect or to advance himself, the more general and muted will be the advance of the community. It seems to me that man's first duty is to himself'.(2) Besides, Johnston could not perceive any contradiction between self-interest and the common good of society. Precisely because man is selfish will he uphold the social interest, because the latter is the surest guarantor of the former. It was in the acceptance of those values that Johnston saw Africa's future as being dependent upon. He was later to advise the Negroes in the New World to achieve their emancipation and dignity by following the trail blazed by the

1. Ibid, p. 19
2. Ibid.

Jews - making money and using it as a lever of social power.

Johnston's evolutionist outlook and social Darwinism also influenced his outlook on the question of race, with which Victorian England was very much concerned. In 1910 he summarised his Evolutionist theories in a book, The Negro in the New World, which was particularly concerned about the role the Negro had played in the past, and was likely to play in the future economic, social, political and cultural life of the New World. But the book was also a summation of the essential aspects of his racial theories. The superiority or inferiority of a race was not only to be measured by the yardstick of that race's attainments in technology, material comfort and culture, it was also a function of its 'cranial capacity'.(1) He said, 'The average Negro brain is larger than the Australoid's but smaller than that of a normal European'(2). And he then classified the 'cranial capacities' of his racial categories thus: Australoid: 1245cc.; Asiatic Negro: 1260cc.; Bushman: 1331cc.; African Negro: 1388cc.; Mongol: 1580cc.; and Caucasian: 1600cc.(3)

We cannot clearly grasp the attitudes and reactions of Johnston, along with other British officials, to early manifestations of pan-Africanism in British Central Africa unless we get a clear appreciation of the philosophical outlook, scientific convictions, and the moral imperatives that conditioned and moulded their thinking and their vision of Africa's future and the role of the Negro. Although this article treats of the era of Johnston, it is also worth noting that his official successors were also animated by the same forces that inspired Johnston.

Amongst the Caucasians themselves, the Anglo-Saxon represented, possibly the finest breed of the race. He confessed to Sir Percy Anderson in 1894: 'Personally, as you know, I have a secret pity and contempt for all foreigners. I mean that it seems to me, if one has missed being an Englishman, it does not matter what one is, and except for our kinship with the Dutch and the German, which raises them a little in the scale, I think that all foreigners are just about as good one nation as the other. If I were an Indian, I would not much care whether I was governed by Portugal or France'(4).

Perhaps it was this belief in Anglo-Saxon virtue as well as his superiority complex, apart from his atheistic convictions, which also contributed to his wrangle with the Scottish missionaries in Malawi. Indeed one is inclined to speculate why he took such an exception to having among his senior and junior officials Scotsmen or even people with a Scottish accent. In 1893 he requested the Foreign Office for a legal Consul - a university man, a barrister, a gentleman, young - not over thirty - five, of good constitution, of agreeable appearance, cheerful, and above all, not a 'Scotchman [sic] - or at any rate without a strong Scotch [sic] accent'.(5)

Johnston's Evolutionist or social Darwinian philosophy also manifested itself in the way he perceived the respective roles to be played by the various races in colonial Malawi. In colonial Malawi the White man was to be the ruler and the African the ruled. His policy towards the African was inspired by his view of the Negro; 'He is a fine animal but in his wild state exhibits a stunted mind and a dull content with his surroundings

1. Johnston, H.H., THE NEGRO in the New world, 1910, p.xi.
2. Johnston, H.H. op.cit, p.10.
3. Ibid.
4. F.O. 2/66, H.H. Johnston to Sir Percy Anderson, 9/2/1894, public Record Office, (P.R.O.) London.
5. F.O. 2/54, H.H. Johnston to Davidson, 10/5/1893, P.R.O. Lon.

which induces mental stagnation, cessation of all upward progress, and even of retrogression towards the brute. In some respects I think the tendency of the Negro for several centuries past has been an actually retrograde one. As we come to read the unwritten history of Africa by researchers into languages, manners, customs, traditions, we seem to see a backward rather than a forward movement going on for some thousand years past - a return towards the savages and even the brute. I can believe it possible that had Africa been more isolated from contact with the rest of the world, and cut off from the immigration of the Arabs and Europeans, the purely Negroid races, left to themselves so far from advancing towards a higher type of humanity, might have actually reverted by degrees to a type no longer human. (1)

Although by the time Johnston wrote The Negro in the New World in 1910 he had revised some of his more extreme views, nevertheless he still retained the essence of the above theory, and, in any case, what is significant is that as far as our field of investigation is concerned it was the above outlook that lay behind this political vision and administrative measures during the time he was shaping the destinies of colonial Malawi. According to Johnston, the White and Black races were so far apart in the evolutionary scale that another race was required to play an intermediate role in B.C.A. While he was on leave in 1894 he toured the industrial and commercial cities of Britain in an attempt to project the economic possibilities of B.C.A., to attract capital and white settlers, and therefore help stamp out the scourge of slave raiding and trading. One of his speeches, (2) delivered under the auspices of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce in St. Georges Hall, in Liverpool, was reported in The Times. For Johnston, the Germans and Portuguese in their territories did not seem to be doing their share to eradicate the slave trade and to introduce 'legitimate trade'. The British must give the lead in B.C.A. Yet he doubted that full-blooded White people would settle and form the bulk of the population. While North Africa and Africa South of the Zambezi could be 'White Man's colonies' B.C.A., would remain 'Black Man's countries' (3) and this was largely for climatic reasons.

The Asian, however, could stand the climate better than the European; and he was as clever with his hands as with his wits, though he lacked initiative and the capacity to govern. The pure Negro, left to himself, would revert to barbarism, and to a sub-human type unless he were 'dashed' with blood of a superior race. The White Man was too superior, however, and inter-mixture with the Negro did not produce 'satisfactory' results. But the Asiatic formed with the Black Man a satisfactory hybrid. The inevitable results of European domination must be to drive the Arab back to Arabia; and he looked to India to furnish the third intermediate element so indispensable to Africa. In a letter to Lord Rosebery (4) at the Foreign Office Johnston had, in fact, proposed that if the Arab 'and coastmen', could not be removed from Central Africa by force, they ought to be 'bought out'. To Sir Percy Anderson he said: 'We find these Indian traders of immense advantage to ourselves as being the best kind of middle-man between the White Man and the Negro, and the White Man and the climate. In fact, North of the Zambezi as you know, my hobby is black, white, and yellow, only I prefer the yellow Indian to the ivory-coloured Arabs'. (5)

1. Johnston H.H. British Central Africa, 1897, p.472
2. Reported in F.O. 2/66 H.H. Johnston to Rosebery, 10/3/1894; enclosure "Report on the Eastern Portion of B.C.A. 1891-1894, 31/3/1894," P.R.O. London.
3. F.O. 2/65, W.E. Davidson to H.H. Johnston, 7/11/1894. P.R.O. London.
4. F.O. 2/66 H.H. Johnston to Rosebery 10/3/1894. P.R.O. London.
5. F.O. 2/55 H.H. Johnston to Sir Percy Anderson, 10/10/1893, P.R.O. London.

He also said in 1894 that 'I have now come to the conclusion after years of experience in this part of Africa that the presence of the Arab is incompatible with the introduction of European civilisation and sooner or later the Arabs must go from Central Africa'. (1) He therefore hoped that Indian peasants, 'the Banyan merchant', and also the artisan would settle in tropical Africa and help the Negro by practical example; 'On the whole I think the admixture of yellow that the Negro requires should come from India, and that East Africa and B.C.A. should become the America of the Hindu'. (2) The mixture of the two would give the Indian the physical development which he lacks and he in his turn would transmit to his half Negro offspring the industry, ambition, and aspiration towards civilised life the Negro so markedly lacks.

To symbolise his vision Johnston adopted White, Yellow, and Black as the three official colours on the coat of arms of B.C.A., on the stamps, and other places. B.C.A. would be "ruled by the Whites, developed by Indians, and worked by the Blacks". (3)

The foregoing analysis portrays an agent of Imperialism who would not brook anything that stood in the way of Imperial expansion and White supremacy. It portrays his political, social, and economic vision of B.C.A., the relationship between the races, and the considerations that would prompt and determine his attitudes to early signs of the pan-African spirit in Central Africa. One is likely to discern here the picture of a rabid racist of the NAZI ilk. In fact, his belief in Evolution precisely had the opposite effect - it tempered what extreme racial prejudice he might have nursed against the Negro. Thus the Negro could not be written off as a complete and hopeless failure. Precisely because of his belief in Evolution, and the evolutionist agency of the British Empire, for Johnston the Negro could be raised up on the ladder of 'civilisation and culture'. He wrote optimistically, 'Fortunately for the Black Man, in all his varieties but two or three of the most retrograde, he is NOT (my emphasis) too far gone for recovery and an upward turn upon the evolutionary path - a turn which, if resolutely followed, may with steady strides bring him upon a level at some future day with the White and Yellow species of Man'. (4)

Johnston's fundamental recognition that the Negro is 'retrievable', coupled with his conviction that owing to climatic reasons and dearth of medical know-how tropical Africa (that is, Africa north of the Zambezi and south of the Sahara) could never be colonised by the White races and would therefore remain 'Black Man's country' led him to the conclusion that British policy regarding the political future of these areas, and especially that of B.C.A. with the shaping of whose foundations he had particularly been entrusted, had to be fashioned in the light of this grim reality.

The Negro was at the bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder: 'yet it must be borne in mind', Johnston wrote of the prospects before the Black race and the British Empire, 'that he was the owner of the country before we came, and deserves, nay, is entitled to, a share in the land, commensurate with his needs and numbers; that in numbers he will always exceed the White Man, while he may some day come to rival him in intelligence; and that

1. Johnston, H.H., British Central Africa, 1897, p.472.
2. Ibid. p.184
3. Ibid, pp. 183-184.
4. Ibid.

finally if we do not use our power to govern him with absolute justice the time will come sooner or later when he will rise against us and expel us as the Egyptian officials were expelled from the Sudan'. (1)

The foregoing is remarkable not only because Johnston acknowledged the 'humanity' of the Negro in Africa and his faith in the African's capacity for eventual intellectual equality with the White Man, but mostly for his incisive and quasi-prophetic prediction of the force of nationalism. He employed this remarkable insight to try and pre-empt any possible racial strife in the future, though the extent to which he succeeded is a moot question, knowing as we do, through historical hindsight, how most of the grievances over land, labour, and so on, that were ventilated by Malawian African nationalists after World War II, and which had been responsible for considerable African agitation, including the Chilembwe Rising of 1915, had their roots deeply embedded in the Johnstonian era.

Johnston, however, did try to pre-empt some of the causes of a hostile pan Africanist consciousness. According to Johnston's judgement, the ideal of the European trader and planter in Tropical Africa would be a country where the Black millions toiled unremittingly for the benefit of the White Man. They would see that the Negroes were well fed and not treated with harshness, but anything like free will as to whether they went to work or not, or any attempt at competing with the White Man as regards education or skilled labour would not be tolerated. On the other 'extreme' was the 'equally unreasonable opinion entertained by the missionaries' of a certain type that he thought was fast disappearing, that Tropical Africa was to be developed with English money and at the cost of English lives, solely and only for the benefit of the Black Man, who, as he thought was the case in mission stations, was to lead an agreeably idle life, receiving food and clothing gratis, and not being required to do much in exchange but make a more or less hypocritical profession of Christianity. He appreciated that missionaries had acted as a counterpoise to the possibly 'selfish policy of the irresponsible White pioneer, in whose eyes the native was merely a chattel, a more or less useful animal, but with no rights and very little feeling.

Johnston therefore saw his role as that of establishing a 'modus vivendi' between the two 'extremes' - a moderate compromise that would be in the interests of both Black and White. As he saw it, it was the mission of the 'impartial administrator' to adopt a mean course between the extreme of sentiment and the extreme of selfishness. But for the enterprise and capital of the much-criticised, rough, and ready pioneer, B.C.A. would, according to Johnston, be of no value and the natives would receive no payment for the products of their land, would, in fact, relapse into their almost pithecoïd existence of fighting, eating, and procreating. European settlers, as far as Johnston was concerned, ought to be encouraged to come to Central Africa, and yet on the other hand, provision must be made for the future participation of the African as a full-fledged participant in the economic, political, social, and cultural life of the country.

1. Ibid.

In the meantime, B.C.A., was remote from self-government, and could only be administered under the benevolent despotism of the Imperial Government, though in the future developed administration there was no reason to suppose that black men might not serve as officials in common with White and Yellow men, just as there were Negro officials in the administration of the West African colonies.

The fact that Johnston reckoned with the possible future participation of the African in the Administration of B.C.A. derived not only from his Evolutionist theories, but also from his conception of an ideal British Empire. 'The British Empire is, or should be, independent of considerations of race and colour, and should take as its sole standard of citizenship, mental, moral, and physical qualifications. Otherwise, we have no right to interfere with these alien races, and teach them to walk in our ways and to submit to our rule'. (1)

This was an echo of Rhodes's dictum of 'equal rights for all civilised men'. It was probably this, more than anything else, that earned for Johnston the epithet 'liberal imperialist'. He was certainly 'liberal' by the standards of his time, but African historians, while appreciating his overall progressiveness and optimism regarding the future of the African in Tropical Africa ('Black Man's Country'), may probably fail to detect a penumbra of 'liberalism' in any theory that fell short of eventual total political emancipation of the continent, and which consigned Africa south of the Zambezi and North of the Sahara to the fate of 'White Man's country' on a parallel with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other White settler dominions.

Besides, even for Johnston, equality between Black and White in 'Black Man's Country' was a fairly distant prospect. He opined that 'it takes at least generations before any clear appreciation of the principles of morality, truth, gratitude, and honour can penetrate the intellect of and curb the instincts of the Negro. You cannot in a year or two convert a wolf into a sheep-dog, or a skulking jackal into a black and tan terrier; this change cannot be effected in the one individual as a rule, no matter how long he may live, the result can only be attained by generations of transmitted culture, induced by constant restraint and careful education. Even then....there will be occasionally disappointing reversions'...(2)

West Indians and U.S. Negroes, by their centuries-old association with the White Man's civilisation represented for Johnston a tangible example of what the British Empire could do to the African. In his book, The Negro in the New World, 1910, Johnston presented a summation of his view of the slave trade and slavery as an institution practised by the various European nations, the relative merits or de-merits of each European slaving nation, and the impact of the whole institution of the Negroes in the America and the West Indies. Above all, his research convinced him that, given the chance to prove himself, the Negro would prove himself capable of some or all the tasks and skills then associated with the White man. But that was in 1908-1910, after the termination of his colonial service. At the moment we are concerned with his view of the West Indian and U.S. Blacks at the time that he was shaping the destinies of B.C.A.

1. Ibid. p.202
2. Ibid.

New World Blacks who came to Africa were imbued with a sense of mission toward Africa and its 'benighted people', and were inspired by a pan-African spirit, and we would now wish to examine Johnston's attitude to these people. In his book on B.C.A. 1897, he recorded that 'my hope for the eventual results lies in the knowledge of what has been done to the Negroes of the West Indies! Some of the Best, hardworking, most satisfactory, sensible, missionaries he had ever known had been West Indian Negroes, 'in colour as dark as the Africans they go to teach, but in excellence of mind, heart, and brain - capacity, fully equal to their European colleagues'. (1) These men had been more than three generations removed from the 'uncivilised Negro' and were 'as much strangers to Africa and African habits as the average European'.

It may well be because of this conviction that Johnston believed that the Negroes of the New World had an especial rôle to play in the 'redemption' of Africa. On 24th November, 1896 Johnston wrote to the Foreign Office seeking official sanction for his proposed scheme to import West Indian Negroes into B.C.A. (2) It is not clear whether Johnston expected the Negroes to play the rôle of educationists or missionaries, or settlers, who would teach the African, by positive example, how to improve agricultural and other economic techniques. Or was this an alternative to an earlier scheme to settle Indian peasants and traders as the intermediate racial group between two groups that were poles apart on the evolutionary scale? If this is so then Johnston's conception of racial rôles in B.C.A. was not a question of race per se, but rather it was the function of a group's standing in the evolutionary process - so that even Blacks who had a long association with 'the most advanced racial group' could still play the intermediate rôle.

The Foreign Office apparently had no objections to the scheme. Lord Salisbury, in his reply in 1897, directed that 'he sanctions the proposals you have made on condition that the grant of plots of land to immigrants of the non-European races must be regarded purely as an experiment, that only a limited number of plots shall be assigned to such immigrants and that none shall be granted to Chinese'. Johnston was also cautioned against alienating land which the Administration had acquired and over which it had 'a clear and full title' by purchase of cession from the native holder or by some other valid means. Johnston's letter was referred to the Colonial Office, and he was sent, for his own information, a copy of correspondence between that Department and Mr. Albert Thorne, relating to the question. (3) Copies of these papers were transmitted to the Acting Commissioner and Consul-General (Alfred Sharpe) in B.C.A. for his information and guidance 'on the subject of the grant of land to persons of other than European or American origin who may come to B.C.A. as immigrants. (4)

H.H. Johnston's scheme is particularly significant because it was the first officially projected scheme to enable Blacks from the West Indies to serve their ancestral Continent. It was the first officially sponsored 'pan-Africanist' project in B.C.A. Yet it was by no means the first time that a White Man had thought of a scheme to bring West Indian Blacks to that part of Africa. A British doctor, Dr. James Johnston, (5) who had

1. Ibid. p. 203.

2. See F.O. 2/126. F.O. to H.H. Johnston, 15/1/1897, P.R.O. London.

3. Albert Thorne was a Barbadian of African descent who tried to set up a colony in Malawi for the repatriation and settlement of peoples of African ancestry in the New World.

4. F.O. 2/126 F.O. to Sharpe, 15/1/1897, P.R.O. London.

5. See Johnson, Dr. James, Reality Versus Romance in South Central Africa, 1893.

lived in Jamaica from 1874 until 1890, had in 1891 set out on a scheme to use Jamaicans as missionaries in B.C.A., inspired in the inception of his undertaking 'by a belief that Black men from Jamaica, by reason of their early adaptability to climatic conditions and supposable racial sympathy' could be more successful than anyone else. This scheme ended in complete fiasco. But Dr. Johnston's project is significant in that it furnishes evidence that even as early as 1891 there were already 'White pan-Africanists' that is, white men who saw in taking Blacks from the New World one way of 'elevating' and Christianising Africa. This 'religious' or 'Christian' pan-Africanism is normally associated with the spectre of 'Ethiopianism'. However, at this early date we notice that at least in Central Africa the original impetus did not come from Blacks themselves, but from 'negrophile' White men. One can safely say that Dr. Johnston's project, though inspired by religious rather than philosophical (i.e. evolutionist) imperatives, could not have been opposed by the British officials, especially H.H. Johnston, in the period of the Johnstonian administration.

The next allusion to West Indian Negroes was in the form of the 'Annual Report on the Trade and General Conditions of B.C.A. from April, 1896 to March 31, 1897'. (1) In it was a Report dated 1st January, 1897, by R.C. Greville, British Vice-Consul at Chinde. His report, which betrayed his curiosity, interest, and optimism, also reflected the enthusiasm with which Johnston himself might have reported on a similar occasion. He reported: 'A somewhat curious development in this direction is the recent arrival of several Negroes from the U.S.A., who stated that they have been attracted by the undoubted progress which B.C.A. is making. They are educated men, and appear to desire to settle down to useful employment. (2)

From the documentary evidence available it is not possible to surmise whether this group of West Indian Negroes was part of Johnston's averred and officially approved scheme. Their occupational nature cannot be deduced either. And it is not possible to discover whether they did, in fact, eventually settle in B.C.A. The next record of the advent of New World Blacks that we have, and which lies outside the scope of this paper, is that of the Seventh Day Adventist missionary Rev. Thomas Branch and family, in April, 1901.(3)

In the intervening period, however, a radical, fundamentalist, and 'pan-Africanist' White missionary, Joseph Booth, had also conceived of a scheme to import and settle Jamaican Negroes in B.C.A. (4) The activities of this man have been adeptly described in an eminent work by Professor George Shepperson and Mr. T. Price, Independent African, 1958, and shall not be repeated here. Even though the above schemes to import and settle Negroes from the New World do not appear to have come to fruition, they furnish conclusive evidence that British attitudes and reactions to U.S. and West Indian Negroes, and therefore to the manifestation of pan-Africanism with which they were imbued, were positive and favourable, provided there was no challenge posed to the historic and quasi-Providential mission of that splendid agency of the 'Evolutionary deity' - the

1. F.O. 2/127 H.H. Johnston to F.O., 6/1/1897; Enclosure: Report by R.C. Greville, British Vice-Consul at Chinde, 1/1/1897, P.R.O.London.
2. Ibid.
3. Shepperson, G. and Price, T., Independent African, 1958, p.135.
4. C.O. 525/28. A.Sharpe to Lord Elgin, 15/5/1909, P.R.O.London.

British Empire. Indeed, Blacks from the New World were viewed not as a challenge to, but as a confirmation of an reinforcement to, the civilising mission of the Empire and the Caucasian race. Pan-Africanism was thus seen by Johnston and his officials as complementary, and not contradictory to, the imperial mission and as an agency of the Evolutionary process in as far as Westernised Negroes spread tenets of the Caucasian civilisation to the 'benighted' Africans. Thus Johnston himself, and perhaps some of his colleagues, was enthusiastically involved in schemes to foster solidarity and communication between Native Africans and peoples of the African diaspora.

One conduit for the spread of the pan-African spirit was the migration of Malawians to countries outside their territorial borders. During the era of Johnston the migratory pattern had already been set. Professor B. Pachai had postulated the possible causes and consequences of this diaspora.(1) The White settlers and the established conventional missionary organisations objected to this migration on the grounds that it caused serious labour shortages in Malawi, but more seriously because it 'polluted' the natives with such subversive and seditious ideas as Ethiopianism and pan-Africanism.

But during the era of Johnston, officials were not opposed to the emigration of Malawians in the quest for work in the south. What the Government essayed to do was merely to regulate the out-flow of migrant labourers. They were not opposed to the immigration into Malawi, of peoples of African descent in the New World, provided political power was vested in officials of the British Empire for the foreseeable future. They were favourably disposed to 'pan-Africanism' (and its agents) as a mode of consciousness transcending the limitations of tribalism, but had reservations with its relentlessly anti-colonial long-term political logic. Evolutionism provided the structural model of a racial hierarchy that affirmed, rather than negated, the historic mission of the British Empire, while leaving the door open for some form of eventual racial equality in the far-distant future.

But the correlation between racial pigmentation and status in the evolutionists' model hierarchy was an invidious element and a negation of the very fundamental characteristic of evolutionist dynamics - the permanence of change towards a higher mode of existence. It would take several millennia for the Negro to attain to not only the cranial capacity of the Caucasian (if he ever would), but also the skin pigmentation of the finest human product of the Evolutionary progress. The time scale of Johnston's political perspectives was demarcated in thousands of years, and if he were to be aware of what eventually transpired in Malawi barely six decades after he was its Administrator, the attainment of independence by the Black population of the country, he would turn in his grave. The evolutionary process, in which he had so much faith, and which he believed to be the law of natural and social development, appeared in that particular instance to have been transformed into a revolutionary process (in terms of Johnston's own categories) whose consequences are outside the scope of our present concern.

1. Pachai, B., "The Malawi Diaspora and Elements of Clements Kadalie", Central African Historical Association, Local Series No. 24. 1968.



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